ANNEX 2.G: NAMIBIA

Project Name: Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE)	**Contract Number:** 690-A-00-99-00227-00
Project Duration: 1993-2009	**Funding Mechanism:** Cooperative Agreement Geographic Information for Sustainable Development (GISD)
Strategic Objective: 673-003 Increased benefits received by historically disadvantaged Namibians from sustainable local management of natural resources.	**Budget:** $17,000,000
Donor Agencies/Partners: • Associates in Rural Development, Inc. (ARD) • Government of Namibia, Ministries of Environment and Tourism • Management Systems International (MSI) • Namibian Community-Based Tourism Association (NACOBTA) • Rossing Foundation • USAID • World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	

Context

Namibia has a total land area of approximately 825,000 sq km and a population estimated at 1.8 million, with an annual growth rate of three percent. It is the driest country south of the Sahara, with average rainfall varying from above 600 mm in the northeast to less than 25 mm in the Namib Desert to the west. Rainfall is erratic both temporally and spatially, leading to large localized differences in precipitation and large fluctuations from one year to the next. Drought is a regular occurrence.

The shortage of water is the main limiting factor on Namibia's economy, which is almost entirely reliant on natural resources. Two-thirds of the population live in rural areas and are directly dependent on the soil and living natural resources for their livelihoods.

Although Namibia is classified as a low-middle income country with a relatively high per capita income ($1,730 in 2001), the distribution of income is highly skewed. Namibia has a Gini coefficient measuring 0.70, which is one of the highest values recorded worldwide. Approximately 55 percent of the nation's income accrues to only 10 percent of the population. Fifty percent of the population fall below the poverty line and almost 35 percent of Namibians live on less than $1 per day.

Because of the highly variable climatic conditions, there is a need to diversify economic activities in rural areas. Wildlife-based tourism is one of the main forms of diversification, and tourism is the third highest contributor to GDP. However, in the past, local communities were excluded from most of the benefits from tourism, apart from some menial jobs.

In many communal areas, wildlife numbers declined dramatically in the 1980s because of drought and heavy poaching by South African officials and local people. In northwest Namibia, NGO projects demonstrated that community-based approaches to wildlife conservation could be effective. Namibia developed a new Policy on Wildlife Management, Utilization and Tourism in Communal Areas and the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996. The intent of the policy was to enable rural communities to gain the same rights of use and benefit from wildlife as commercial farmers and to gain rights over tourism concessions. The Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996 enabled the Minister of Environment and Tourism (MET) to give rights over wildlife and tourism to local communities that formed a management body called a conservancy.

Conservancies are socially, rather than territorially or administratively defined. They could include multiple communities. Before rights were conferred, a conservancy was required to have defined membership and boundaries and a representative management committee. Once these conditions were met, the Nature Conservation Amendment Act conferred the ownership of game that could be hunted (i.e., oryx, springbok, kudu, warthog, buffalo, and bush pig) for the conservancy's own use and the right to apply for permits for the use of protected and specially protected game. The government set the quota for off-take.

The LIFE project diverged significantly from historical land allocation practices and access to resources in Namibia under colonial rule. When Namibia was under German rule between 1888 and 1917, white settlers appropriated much of the central part of the country and began the process of developing "reserves" for the native tribal groups. In many instances, the land allocated to tribal groups was amongst the least suitable for crop growing and livestock farming, constituting large parts of the arid northwest and of the Kalahari sand veld in the east and northeast. At independence in 1990, the freehold sector (almost exclusively white) comprised 43 percent of the country's landholdings, 41 percent was communally held land, and 15 percent was conservation areas and other state land. Nearly one million people now live on communal land, while a few thousand people own land in freehold. The LIFE project, by contrast, is demarcated by decentralization of natural resources and a shift in land distribution.

Project Objectives

USAID began funding community-based conservation in Namibia through the LIFE Project in 1993, as an extension of the Botswana Natural Resources Management Project (1989-1997). The aim was to support existing government and NGO initiatives to devolve rights over wildlife and tourism to local communities in order to promote sustainable natural resource management on communal land. The LIFE Project entered a second phase in 1999, which ended in 2004, and a third phase will run through 2009.

The overall objective of LIFE has been to improve the quality of life of rural Namibians through sustainable natural resources management. The project has focused on three main components:

- ***Rural development:*** increasing the income and other benefits to local communities through sustainable natural resources management, and in particular through wildlife-based tourism activities
- ***Democracy and governance:*** supporting the establishment of representative community-based management institutions called conservancies, which can make decisions about natural resources management and other development activities
- ***Sustainable natural resources management*:** the objective is for the conservancies to actively manage their land resources, leading to an improved resource base

Approach

LIFE I: In this phase, the project operated as a pilot community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) effort and was designed to test CBNRM approaches in Namibia. The targeted areas were primarily Caprivi and eastern Otjozondjupa (Nyae Nyae) regions in the northeast areas of Namibia.

LIFE II: This phase provided continuing support for earlier conservancy development efforts and built upon the successful efforts of LIFE I. It expanded program support to Erongo and Khaodi/Hoas areas of western Namibia. Phase II also provided support for the development of an effective national-level CBNRM program management structure. The intent was to build up Namibian capacity, both governmental and nongovernmental, to fully manage the program as the WWF involvement was scaled down and phased-out.

LIFE III ("LIFE Plus"): This phase will focus on institutional support to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to build its capacity to implement CBNRM. It will continue to build the capacity of NGOs to support the conservancies as well as their institutional capacity of conservancies to manage their own affairs. An additional goal is to help them build sound governance systems and procedures that ensure accountability and transparency in decision-making and financial management. Harmonizing and possibly integrating sector policies that promote CBNRM, and coordination between sectors, are important. LIFE Plus has a strong emphasis on small business development by conservancies and individuals and will continue to support conservancies in their management of natural resources, particularly with wildlife monitoring and exploring options for sustainable use.

Achievements

As noted in the USAID Strategy, FY 2004-FY 2010, the LIFE Program has, on the national level, positively affected economic growth and poverty reduction, biodiversity recovery and environmental rehabilitation, and government policy and legislation, as well as local participation and empowerment. Income and benefits to CBNRM program participants reached $2.35 million in 2004. The total number of conservancies increased from 15 in 2002 to 31 in 2004. Eighteen of the conservancies are receiving cash benefits. Contributions to the national economy by CBNRM-assisted enterprises are conservatively estimated at $5.5 million, including turnover of joint-venture lodges, sustainable trophy hunting, thatching grass, and other direct-income sources.

Private-sector partners in conservancies generated these revenues, while conservancy income and benefits, estimated at $1.76 million, represent a 31 percent increase over last year. Job creation has also expanded, with 547 full-time and 3,250 part-time jobs created in conservancy areas. The number of beneficiaries has reached 98,995, more than double the target of 48,825. There are an additional 100,000 beneficiaries in the emerging conservancies. In some regions, it is estimated that, in 2003, conservancies directly provided 35 percent of residents' total cash income and 28 percent of area employment.

Presently, 31 registered communal area conservancies exist in Namibia, covering close to eight million hectares of land. This is an increase from four conservancies in 1998 covering an area of 1.682 ha. The government is poised to register and gazette an additional 10 conservancies, and another 40 are being formed. This represents significant growth within six years, given that forming a conservancy can be a lengthy and time-consuming process — particularly negotiating boundaries with neighbors and registering members.

Significantly, a number of communities that do not have much potential to generate income from wildlife and tourism have formed conservancies. In some cases there might be unrealistic expectations concerning income generation; however, in others instances, different motives appear to be important. Residents

seem to believe that conservancies can provide useful institutional arrangements for managing other resources such as grazing and for gaining a stronger claim over their land.

There is now sufficient institutional capacity and potential for older conservancies to network with and serve as mentors for others. Institutionally, USAID has helped create a CBNRM unit at the MET and the formation of the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (NACSO).

Conservation Benefits

The development of conservancies has contributed to the maintenance of wild habitat and has helped promote wildlife and tourism as legitimate land uses. Most of the registered conservancies have inventoried existing land uses and zoned specific areas of their conservancies as dedicated wildlife management areas in which trophy hunting and/or photographic tourism is being promoted.

Since 1999, more than 3,000 mixed plains game animals have been re-introduced into six communal conservancies. This major re-introduction effort is being broadly supported by the MET, the private sector (who have donated many animals), the LIFE Program, and international donors. As recently as 1998, the re-introduction of wildlife into communal areas would not have warranted such extensive attention. However, the change in community attitudes and attendant drops in poaching have created the right conditions for game re-introductions.

The increased community stewardship over wildlife is leading to a recovery of wildlife populations across large parts of northern Namibia, in particular the northwest. Not only are wildlife numbers increasing, but distributions of many rare and valuable species are expanding. In particular, the population growth of such endangered species as black rhino and Hartmann's zebra are well documented in northwest Namibia, while elephant ranges are expanding in both the northwest and northeast. High-value species such as roan, sable, and buffalo are also prolific. In the Kunene regional alone, gemsbok, springbok, and Hartmann's zebra sightings were up by 33, 16, and 11 percent, respectively, from 2002 to 2003. Just as significantly, game is also expanding into new southern tier conservancies. More wildlife translates into increased levels of benefits to communities.

Socioeconomic Benefits

The total estimated 2003 direct income and benefits to conservancies and community members amounted to nearly $1.764 million. CBNRM-supported enterprises (i.e., joint-venture lodges, trophy hunting concessions, thatching grass industry, community-based tourism enterprises, crafts, and live game sales) resulted in the employment of 542 full-time and 2,933 part-time employees.

The conservancies with high wildlife numbers and good scenic attractions have the highest potential to generate income. Torra conservancy in Kunene Region, on the margins of the Namib Desert in northwest Namibia, is a good example of this potential. Torra has a small number of residents, only 120 households, within an area of around 352,200 ha. In early 2003, the conservancy distributed a dividend of $76 to members, the first such household distribution the conservancy has made. It was the first conservancy to become fully responsible for all its operating costs (start-up costs for most communal area conservancies are provided by grants from the LIFE project). A number of its activities generate income, including a successful joint-venture agreement with a reputable southern African photographic tourism company to operate an up-market tourism lodge.

The rental and percentage of turnover from the lodge was $30,300 in 2002, income from trophy hunting was $18,000, and the live sale of game generated $13,230. This provided a total income to the conservancy of $61,500. Wages from the lodge were $25,000 and wages from temporary employment by

the safari hunter were $660. For the same period, the value of meat distributed was just over $5,383, and the value of game hunted for personal use was $4,187.

The amounts earned by the conservancy and the household dividend appear small in U.S. monetary terms. However, their significance becomes clear when one considers that the average income of subsistence farming households is estimated at $700 a year, and for the poorest 20 percent of households around $200 a year.

Democracy and Governance Benefits

Community members in the 31 registered conservancies are starting to exercise their devolved rights over wildlife and tourism. This devolution of authority to local level bodies is part of the government's broader democratization of natural resources management that includes giving local communities rights over forests and water.

South Africa's colonial rule in Namibia was based on top-down decision making that did not encourage local-level democracy. Since independence, the Namibian government has introduced a decentralized system of Regional Government. However, the regions are large and there is no government decision-making body below the region in rural areas. Conservancies are starting to fill this gap by providing local-level decision-making bodies that have funds of their own for communities to use for their own development.

Conservancy committees are learning to manage funds on behalf of their members and to include members in decisions on how to use these funds. They are learning to hold their representatives accountable and replace them if necessary. In one conservancy, committee members voted themselves substantial loans from conservancy funds. Once this became widely known by community members, the first available opportunity was used to replace the committee.

Since the initial policy change, several other policy and legislative reforms have been developed to support CBNRM efforts and devolve authority over NRM to local communities, including:

- A policy on the promotion of community-based tourism grants concessionary rights to conservancies for tourism lodge development and operations within conservancy boundaries (1995).
- New legislation currently being drafted (a Parks and Wildlife Act) is expected to give conservancies stronger rights over resources and to create opportunities for community participation in park advisory boards and community access rights to park and reserve resources.
- The wildlife conservancy structure and requirements serve as models for community forest management under a new Forest Development Policy and Forest Act. The MET has decided that rather than having separate conservancy and community forest committees within one community, the two institutions should be integrated. Rural Water Use Associations with their elected Water Point Committees, under new legislation administered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development, have institutional requirements similar to the conservancies. These voluntary associations of individual rural water users would be allowed to manage a water point or group of water points, be responsible for their maintenance, and charge water use fees to cover costs.
- In 1998, the Namibian government adopted a national land policy that provides for tenure rights allocated under the policy and consequent legislation to include all renewable natural resources on the land, subject to sustainable use and the details of sector policy and legislation. Legitimate land rights holders include "legally constituted bodies and institutions to exercise joint ownership rights (and) duly constituted co-operatives." The policy provides for the administration of communal land to be vested in land boards and traditional authorities. It provides for long-term leases (up to 99 years) for

the use of communal land, primarily for business purposes and including tourism concessions. The Communal Land Reform Act does not adequately confer exclusive group rights to land and resources, as provided for under the land policy, and has the potential to undermine existing rights to tourism and trophy hunting granted to local communities through the sector legislation discussed above.

Lessons Learned

One of the major challenges for the project is ensuring that the whole community — not just a few well positioned people — enjoy the benefits generated by conservancies. There is a danger that, once committees have been elected, they become self-serving and do not involve local residents in decision-making. The project has coped with this issue in a number of ways. First, when conservancies are being established, implementing agencies ensure that there is broad-based community participation in awareness meetings and in the decision to form the conservancy. Once a conservancy has been established, members are encouraged to develop a vision for what they want the conservancy to achieve. An integrated management plan is then developed that sets out how the vision will be achieved. This management plan covers the key aspects of governance required to operate the conservancy, including transparent and effective financial management, operating procedures, staff employment policies, procedures for transparent and participatory decision-making, accountability of the committee to members, and communication and information to members. The constitution of the conservancy provides the overall framework to determine the relationship between the committee and members. It establishes the requirement for holding an annual general meeting, the procedure for electing and replacing committee members, and defines the responsibilities and obligations of the committee. During the past year, the project has been encouraging conservancies to devolve decision-making authority to lower levels within the conservancy to promote localized participatory decision-making.

Another large challenge is to build the capacity of local communities to engage in the tourism market. One of the necessary pre-conditions is for communities themselves to have the access rights to tourism sites. In the past, the private sector gained access to sites for tourist lodges on communal land with little or no benefit going back to the communities. One of the aims of policy reform was to give communities access to prime tourism sites with the option of entering into contracts with the private sector for the development of these sites. However, the legislation giving rights to conservancies is somewhat ambiguous regarding tourism rights, and it needs strengthening. Without secure rights to tourism assets, communities have no real bargaining power with the private sector and will remain marginalized.

Furthermore, Namibian land legislation does not provide for secure and exclusive group tenure. Access to land and other natural resources remains unequal. Upon independence from South Africa in 1990, black or mixed-race Namibians were restricted to living in homelands constituting 41 percent of the land. A much smaller number of white commercial farmers held 43 percent of the land in freehold tenure. The balance was in unallocated state lands or for conservation purposes (approximately 14 percent). The former black homelands are now recognized as “communal areas.” Rural residents have access to use the land and its natural resources, but land ownership is vested in the state. This means that where conservancies allocate land specifically for tourism and wildlife, it is difficult for them to prevent outsiders from moving onto this land or using it for livestock grazing.

Another challenge is to develop an understanding of the tourism market and build community business skills. Conservancy committee members and local residents need to understand what international tourists are looking for in terms of accommodation and service standards. Committee members monitoring their joint venture agreements with the private sector need to understand such issues as the difference between turnover and profit, and the typically low returns on investment in the initial start-up years of a tourism business. Another related challenge is linking community-based enterprises with markets.

The project has dealt with these issues by providing targeted support to NGOs that work with community enterprises, particularly NACOBTA. This NGO provides business training to individuals and committees, assists in developing products, helps conservancies enter into joint-venture agreements, and works with community members to understand the needs of tourists and the needs of the market. NACOBTA also helps to market various community-based tourism enterprises and products.

Although some private-sector investors have shown interest in the communal areas of Namibia, investment has not been as high as originally anticipated. This is partly because of a perception that there is little security of tenure on communal land and that the risks are higher than investing on freehold land. The Namibian industry is dominated by small, often family-run tourism companies that do not have the capital to last through the often long negotiation process with communities to sign an agreement. With this tendency now recognized, the project has tried to broker partnerships between conservancies and larger well-established companies.

There are many lessons to be derived from the experience gained from implementing the LIFE project:

- ***The importance of local ownership and partnerships.*** The LIFE Project has benefited considerably from a strong sense of ownership over the project by the Namibian government and NGOs. This sense of ownership will contribute to the sustainability of the LIFE Project. Further, a strong partnership was developed between the project and the various implementing agencies. This partnership was developed initially through the LIFE Program Steering Committee, and has evolved into a formal organization, NACSO. This body has proved to be a useful coordination mechanism for structuring relationships between different organizations and agencies within CBNRM, as well as preventing duplication of activities. Its members have developed a common vision for CBNRM in Namibia, and one of the organization's major strengths is this sense of common purpose. NACSO provides part of the institutional framework for project sustainability.

- ***Long-term support is required for successful CBNRM projects***. It takes many years for a national CBNRM program to evolve and mature and for community institutions to develop the capacity and internal legitimacy to be effective and efficient. Usually donor-funding horizons are too short to allow for incremental growth and progress at the pace dictated by community processes and dynamics and by government bureaucracies. The Namibian CBNRM program has benefited from more than 10 years of continuous donor support from USAID, which has provided a stable foundation for the program to grow and evolve over time. The next phase of USAID support from October 2004 through 2009 will build on this foundation.

- ***The balance between process and product.*** An important principle that has emerged from implementing the LIFE Project is that implementation needs to be based on process rather than the achievement of pre-determined "products" or "outcomes." A process approach to CBNRM focuses as much on the way products are produced as on the products themselves. Experience has shown that, in the long run, a good process is more likely to lead to a good outcome than a quick-fix approach that leaves many issues un-addressed. A process-oriented approach implies sufficient participation in decision-making by beneficiaries themselves. This approach gives beneficiaries the time to reach their own conclusions, enables them to shape the outcome rather than being presented with a fixed package, and acknowledges and deals with their concerns. The LIFE Project has successfully balanced getting the process right with meeting the product requirements.

Opportunities and Next Steps

CBNRM implies that communities are managing resources, but in practice, they are enforcing government poaching rules, rather than developing their own local-use rules. The Government of

Namibia is retaining most of the management authority. Conservancies are not allowed to make binding decisions on broader land management issues such as zoning of grazing, settlement, forest use, or private land enclosures authorized by Government of Namibia. Capacity needs to be built in community-led CBRNM-related NRM planning, including mapping and inventory information, that taps the knowledge of indigenous women and men. While there is a unique opportunity now to apply CBNRM practices to other valuable natural resources, such as forests, fisheries, grazing land, and water, it is not clear if the Government of Namibia will allow communities to engage more meaningfully in management decisions.

For the most part, there has been inadequate socioeconomic baseline data that can be used to document changes in household income, well-being, and poverty reduction. This data needs to be disaggregated by household type (female- or couple-headed households) and conservancy-related benefit streams should be researched for male and female household members. In addition, tools such as poverty mapping would be invaluable to give a clear picture of conservancy impacts.

Measurement systems need to be elaborated to capture other community, household, and individual benefits and changes including less tangible CBNRM achievements related to democracy-building, accountable and more representative governance, nutrition and health improvements, skill development, improved status of women and ethnic minorities, etc. This need will become particularly important as the conservancies are tasked with other development duties or managing other natural resources.

Conservancies, individually and collectively, need to become engaged in policy dialogues related to CBNRM and develop constituency skills related to advocacy and coalition-building. Given the size of Namibia, the dispersed nature of its population, the poverty of many conservancy members, and the status of communications technology in remote areas, networking among constituencies is an ongoing challenge.

Conservancies are filling a sub-regional local governance vacuum created by Namibia's post-independence administrative reforms. In some areas, conservancy leadership is not synonymous with traditional leadership. Conservancies are proliferating. The Government of Namibia is discussing the possibility of expanding the focus of conservancies beyond wildlife and applying this model to other resources. At the same time, decentralization is being discussed in Namibia and some regions have established development committees at different levels. It is not yet clear if this multiplicity of local institutions will be in the best interests of communities or the resources on which they depend.

As organized local bodies, conservancies could sponsor other social and economic programs. For example, conservancies could sponsor HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs. They could also help to introduce technology into rural areas, including information and communication technologies.

Conservancy membership has not necessarily translated into knowledge about, or participation in their activities. In a household survey for seven conservancies, it was found that only about one in four conservancy households knew about conservancy plans or their structures, and only about one in three households reported being conservancy participants. The study methodology does not indicate if women and men within households were interviewed separately. For this reason, their relative knowledge and participation related to conservancies is unknown.

Conservancy constitutions must include criteria to ensure that they contribute to improved governance and management of wildlife populations and also reduce poverty among members of those special districts by distributing collective and/or individual benefits equitably. These rules have produced systems of representation and accountability that meet fairly stringent criteria of democratic governance. At this early stage in their development, some of these institutional arrangements work better than others because the spirit and the letter of the enabling legislation are translated into practice. For example, in a few cases,

the costs and benefits of having wildlife were not always equitably or fairly distributed within a community.

Conservancy earnings can be allocated to collective goods (e.g., school or health infrastructure, roads, other kinds of community buildings). Earnings could be distributed by some formula to the members — for example, on a per capita basis. They could be invested in economic enterprises in the hopes that these would generate both employment opportunities for district members and increased standards of living in other ways.

More emphasis needs to be placed on the financial viability of conservancies and the development of the business skills of the conservancy committees and members. In addition, credit should be expanded for micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas and credit impediments for women should be addressed.

Finally, private-sector partners need greater incentives and security to make investments in remote, high-risk locations. The economic promise of conservancies has been premised largely on the development of tourism joint ventures.

To date, conservancy plans have not generally addressed contingencies, conflict management, or pro-poor safety net strategies. The support organizations for CBNRM need to attract or develop expertise in these areas.

LIFE Plus will build on the activities and successes of the two previous LIFE phases, while addressing some of these issues and opportunities. LIFE Plus has a new emphasis on diversification of resources and integrated resources management, particularly in conservancies that lack large wildlife populations or significant tourism attractions. Conservancies will remain the focus for provision of services and support, as they provide the institutional basis for management of common pool resources and for planning and coordinating local development activities.

Related Materials and Sources of Information

www.dea.met.gov.na/programmes/cbnrm/cbnrm.htm

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